

**Saint Paul Planning Commission
City Hall Conference Center
15 Kellogg Boulevard West**

Minutes August 24, 2007

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, August 24, 2007, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present: Mmes. Donnelly-Cohen, Faricy, Lu, McCall, Morton, Porter, and Messrs. Alton, Barrera, Bellus, Cudahy, Gordon, Johnson, Kramer, Nelson, Rosemark, and Spaulding.

Commissioners Absent: Mmes. *Smitten, *Wencl, and Messrs. *Commers, *Goodlow, and *Margulies.
*Excused

Also Present: Larry Soderholm, Planning Administrator; Tom Beach, Department of Safety and Inspections, Lucy Thompson, Patricia James, Shawntera Hardy, Jessica Rosenfield, Luis Pereira, Christina (Danico) Morrison, Jacob Rife, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes August 10, 2007.

MOTION: *Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen moved approval of the minutes of August 10, 2007. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Alton announced that the commissioners received an invitation from the Parks and Recreation Commission for a trip on the Padelford River Boat on September 12, 2007, from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. There is an RSVP. Chair Alton said that it is a good opportunity for Planning Commissioner members to get to know the Parks and Recreation Commission members and he hopes everyone can be there.

Chair Alton said that the Steering Committee discussed reserving space at a restaurant for a holiday lunch following the regular meeting on December 14th or 28th. Any suggestions from members would be welcome.

III. Planning Administrator's Announcements

Larry Soderholm reported on planning-related business at the City Council for last week. There is no Council meeting next week because it is a fifth Wednesday.

IV. Zoning Committee

OLD BUSINESS

#07-099-317 Midway Shopping Center – Variance of required parking (1095 spaces required 931 spaces proposed, for a variance of 164 spaces). 1460 University Avenue W, SE corner at Snelling. (Sarah Zorn, 651/266-6570)

Commissioner Morton reported that the Zoning Committee has laid this case over to the August 30, 2007 meeting.

#07-096-674 Midway Shopping Center – Site Plan Review for Walgreen's and Big Top Liquors. 1460 University Avenue W, SE corner at Snelling. (Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)

Commissioner Morton reported that the Zoning Committee also laid this case over to the August 30, 2007 meeting.

#07-099-246 Midway Shopping Center – Conditional Use Permit for a drive through sales and service. 1460 University Avenue W, SE corner at Snelling. (Sarah Zorn, 651.266-6570)

The Planning Commission has laid this case over to the September 7, 2007 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

#07-123-065 HRA-Case – Rezoning from RT2 (Townhouse Residential) to B2 (Community Business). 615 Case Avenue, between Payne and Edgerton. (Luis Pereira, 651/266-6591)

MOTION: *Commissioner Morton moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the rezoning. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

#07-043-921 Holman Field Vegetation Plan – Public Hearing for the purpose of reviewing the revegetation plan for Holman Field floodwall. 644 Bayfield Street. (Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)

Tom Beach, Department of Safety and Inspections, gave an overview on the revegetation plan. Mr. Beach stated that in May the Planning Commission approved the site plan and some other actions for sewer work along Bayfield and at Holman Field. They added conditions dealing with the revegetation plan. One of the conditions was for the revegetation plan to come back to the Planning Commission for approval. The resolution also required that the vegetation plan deal with places along Bayfield that had been disturbed, removal of invasive species from the area, and increasing the landscape budget by 25 percent. In July MAC submitted a plan based in part on recommendations from a committee set up by the City and the Saint Paul Design Center. After the plans were submitted to the City, Mr. Beach and Alice Messer from Parks went to look at the site. The disturbed area had been stabilized with new plants and trees and shrubs will screen the floodwall from the river.

Mr. Beach presented pictures of the site. The Department of Natural Resources and the Saint Paul Design Center have both reviewed and signed off on the plan as required in the condition. The Zoning Committee held a public hearing August 16, 2007, and voted 5-0 to recommend

approval. There was testimony at that meeting. Tom Dimond distributed a handout with his concerns/issues.

Commissioner Nelson asked if removing invasive species was a one-time shot. Is there some kind of maintenance program to keep invasives out of the area in the future?

Mr. Beach said it was his understanding that MAC would try to find all the invasive species and remove them. This will give the native plants time to get established. However, there is no requirement for an ongoing commitment.

Commissioner McCall asked about tree planting on the airport side of Bayfield.

Mr. Beach had stated there are a couple of reasons why shrubs are proposed there instead of trees. There is only eight or ten feet to do planting there and the material for the wall should not have plants holding moisture against it. Second, the requirement for native tree species limits the choices available. There will still be plenty of trees on the river side, both new and existing.

MOTION: *Commissioner Morton moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the revegetation plan. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

V. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Central Corridor Station area Planning Process – Adopt resolution to initiate process.
(Donna Drummond, 651/266-6556; Lucy Thompson, 651/266-6578)

Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen announced that there are two resolutions, the first one is to initiate Central Corridor station area planning and the second one is to initiate a Central Corridor TOD Zoning Study.

Lucy Thompson gave some background on both resolutions. The two resolutions are the next steps from the Central Corridor Development Strategy. The Comprehensive Planning Committee is reviewing the Central Corridor Development Strategy and will be recommending its adoption as a chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. The station area planning referred to in the resolution will address the seven stations along University Avenue. The TOD Zoning Study will explore permanent changes to the zoning code and possibly property rezoning to implement the Central Corridor Development Strategy. Staff is especially interested in moving forward on station area planning because Met Council is already underway with preliminary engineering and it is important to have our planning as input to their decisions. Staff is currently working with Urban Strategies, Inc. on a new contract, so there will be excellent continuity between our work on the Central Corridor Development Strategy and station area planning. For the downtown and Capitol stations, we will initiate station area planning in the first quarter of 2008.

MOTION: *Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen moved the Comprehensive Planning Committee's recommendation to adopt the resolution to initiate Central Corridor Station Area Planning. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Central Corridor TOD Zoning Study – Adopt resolution to initiate study.
(Donna Drummond, 651/266-6556)

MOTION: *Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen moved the Comprehensive Planning Committee's recommendation to adopt the resolution to initiate a Central Corridor TOD Zoning Study. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

VI. Neighborhood and Current Planning Committee

Invest Saint Paul – Guest presentation by Stacey Millett, who is in the Mayor's Office as Director of *Invest Saint Paul*, which is a focused neighborhood improvement program.

Ms. Millett began with some background that led to the creation of Invest Saint Paul. About a year ago PED planners analyzed neighborhood data that indicated where there were clusters of problems. They collected data on 21 indicators and grouped it into three clusters—physical condition of property, households under stress, and neighborhood social problems. This analysis with GIS resulted in the identification of target areas for neighborhood improvement. Ms. Millett's supplemented her presentation with overhead maps and charts and with a hand-out.

She said that Invest Saint Paul is creating a new way for the City to think about neighborhood reinvestment to make Saint Paul a highly livable city. Invest Saint Paul is not just another program. The healthier the neighborhoods, the healthier the entire city will be for the long-term. The work of Invest Saint Paul is comprehensive, complex and critical. There is no quick fix for the long-term disinvestment experienced by some parts of our city. Saint Paul is a city of neighborhoods where all must thrive for the city to grow and prosper.

Ms. Millett continued saying that Invest Saint Paul weaves physical development, community building, and citizen engagement together in a focused and strategic way. It is targeting four neighborhoods challenged by economic and social downturns: Dayton's Bluff, the Lower East Side, Frogtown-Thomas/Dale-Aurora St. Anthony, and the North End. Invest Saint Paul is also targeting a few smaller focus areas in need of attention.

Ms. Millett is coordinating all of the City's departments to focus talents and resources on the target areas and achieve greater synergy. The basic strategies are to improve City coordination, to grow strong partnerships, and to make smart capital investments. Invest Saint Paul is committed to engaging residents as key customers, and is dedicated to jumpstarting reinvestment and confidence in the future of the target neighborhoods.

VII. Communications Committee

None

VIII. Task Force Reports

Commissioner Nelson gave an update on the Como Avenue Task Force. The task force will receive their first draft of the final report on September 13, 2007. Then the task force will meet a week after that to review it. The Como Avenue Task Force is working their way toward a December

presentation to the district council and subsequently to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Faricy announced that she participated in a meeting on August 20, 2007, with Ford real estate people, their environmental quality managers and representatives from the City and Port Authority. The City has also retained two environmental experts to advise the City. By September 14th, Ford will decide whether the plant will actually be closed in 2008 or will stay open awhile longer. If the decision to close is reaffirmed, then the planning process can proceed pretty quickly, and Ford may decide to bring a master developer into the process.

Commissioner Johnson said he also attended the meeting on August 20th due to his experience in environmental review work. When Ford ultimately decides to close the plant, their strategy will be to get it to a state of environmental cleanliness where they can sell it for as much money as they can. The Ford facility was built between 1925 and 1940, when environmental laws as we know them today did not exist. You could do anything, anywhere, anytime, anyhow--that is the City's major concern. The phase I results look like a moderately clean plant. There appear to be some minor hot spots, where there were underground storage tanks, above ground storage tanks, loading and unloading areas, and railroad areas. Inside the plant there are some areas where spills of solvents, hydraulic fluids, etc. apparently occurred. As an assembly plant, they do not handle a lot of chemicals. An unusual feature of the Ford site is that it is situated on the river bluff above St. Peter sandstone. Ford mined the sandstone to produce auto glass and there is a network of tunnels under the site. The tunnels were investigated to see if there were signs of storage barrels or spills. The initial results look fairly clean.

Mr. Johnson summarized that more specific environmental analysis remains to be done. Some of the investigation cannot be done until the plant is closed; then floors can be ripped up and working yard areas can be dug up to discover exactly how much soil and/or groundwater contamination exists. The preliminary evaluation doesn't look too bad. There will be some clean up, and the clean up standards vary depending on what the ultimate use of the land is going to be. Thus, the final redevelopment plan may need to be adjusted to account for clean-up requirements and costs.

Commissioner Gordon reported on the STAR Board's large loan and grant recommendations for 2007 and on the status of the STAR budget. The funding recommendations were in the packet. Of 22 applications, the board recommended funding 9, of which 8 had a loan component. The total recommended funding is \$2.24 million, and a little more than half is for loans. This is the first time in several years that a majority of the funds are going to loans, and the board wants to continue this in the future, so that funds will come back into the STAR program and get recycled out into additional loans and grants.

Commissioner Gordon continued, saying the second item he wanted to talk about is the 2008 budget issue. Some City Council members are considering using Neighborhood and Cultural STAR Funds (\$3.8 million) for the general operating budget. That would affectively put the STAR Board and Neighborhood and Cultural STAR programs out of business. There would be no funding left. The Mayor does not support that approach. The Mayor recognizes that the Neighborhood STAR Program is the most viable development program the city has. In terms of match and leverage for example: this year the \$2.24 million in STAR funds leveraged over \$24 million in matching funds. That is almost a 12-to-1 match for every STAR dollar. If the sales tax funds get swept into the general operating budget, they will be gone. There won't be any matching or recycling of funds. The STAR Board has passed a resolution opposing the use

of Neighborhood STAR Program funds for the 2008 operating budget. Following Mr. Gordon's statement, there was some discussion about whether the Planning Commission should take an official action in support of the STAR program.

Commissioner Johnson announced that the Water Comp Plan Task Force is meeting on September 10th at the Pig's Eye Metropolitan Waste Water Treatment Plant, which has been locked down since 9/11 under Homeland Security rules. The task force is touring the plant at 2:30 p.m. It is the biggest single capital facility in Saint Paul. This is a rare opportunity. If other Commission members would like to join the tour, please contact Andrew Jacobson or Larry Soderholm.

IX. Old Business

None

X. New Business

None

XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary
Planning and Economic Development Department,
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Respectfully submitted,

Approved _____
(Date)

Larry Soderholm, AICP
Planning Administrator

Marilyn Porter
Secretary of the Planning Commission